
THE
Lord Bishop of *BANGOR*'s
S E R M O N

Before the RIGHT HONOURABLE
House of LORDS,

On *Friday, January 30, 1761.*

Die Lunæ, 2 Feb. 1761.

Ordered,

BY the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, That the Thanks of this House be, and are hereby given, to the Lord Bishop of *Bangor*, for the Sermon by him preached before this House on *Fridaylast*, in the Abbey-Church, *Westminster*; and he is hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith printed and published.

Ashley Cowper, Cler. Parliamentor.

S E R M O N

Preached before the Right Honourable the
Lords SPIRITUAL and TEMPORAL in
Parliament assembled,

694.2.18
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I N T H E

Abbey-Church, *Westminster*,On *Friday*, January 30, 1761.

B E I N G T H E

Day appointed to be observed as the Day of the
Martyrdom of King CHARLES I.

K. Egerton BY

JOHN, Lord Bishop of BANGOR.

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HOSEA, III^d. Chap. 4th. Verse.

*The children of Israel shall abide many days
without a king, and without a prince, and
without a sacrifice.*

ALTHOUGH it is one of the principal
and distinguishing characters of the christian religion, that it continually inculcates the doctrine of a superintending providence, which watches over all our actions, and will surely bring them to a strict account, according to the eternal rules of justice, in the world to come ; yet ought we not from hence to conclude, that things, even in this world, are wholly abandoned to chance, or to the passions, caprices, prejudices and vices of man ; having good and sufficient reason to believe, that the Deity reserves to himself, and exercises from
B time

Luke i. 51.

time to time, his undoubted power of rewarding virtue and correcting vice, *exalting the humble and scattering the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*

Mat. v. 17.

It must be acknowledged, that the jewish religion teaches an immediate superintendence in a more particular and express manner, than it is taught in the gospel of Christ; and indeed it makes so essential a part of the law of Moses, that some serious and well-disposed christians have been inclined to think, it was even confined to that law, and that it now makes no part of the christian faith. But this conclusion appears to have been formed too hastily; for the moral government of the world is not of the nature of the temporary and merely ceremonial part of the mosaic law, and therefore we are not justified in looking on that doctrine, as abrogated by the coming of our blessed Saviour, who expressly says, *he came not to destroy, but to fulfill the law and the prophets*; nor is it consonant to the dictates of right reason, that the bringing life and immortality to light should render our hopes and fears, as to the things of this world, useless and of no avail; for an expectation, arising even from such hopes and such fears, must greatly contribute to confirm our good and to restrain our evil dispositions, as it sets before our eyes, in one great view, the constant and uniform agency of the supreme Being throughout the whole course of our existence, so far as is consistent with the different circumstances

cumstances and exigencies of the state, in which we are placed. It is true, that the superintendence of Providence here alluded to, may in some sense be said to be peculiar to the Jews. For among them the promises and rewards were chiefly, if not solely temporal; their civil government, if it may be so called, was visibly carried on under the known and confessed direction of the Deity, by his instruments the prophets, and was literally a Theocracy. Immediate vengeance was taken, in many cases, where the transgression was great. The nature and even the manner of their punishment was frequently foretold, if they should become disobedient: and in this, as well as in many other particulars, was the condition of the Jews eminently distinguished from that of any other nation.

But whatever distinction the Almighty might have thought fit to make with regard to the Jews, it is evident from the relation of history, that other nations were not left entirely to themselves in this world to continue in their evil courses, but were sometimes visited with temporal punishments, as a warning to the rest of mankind.

Nineveh, Babylon, and other cities were destroyed on account of their sins; and it was for transgression, that the old world was overwhelmed by the deluge, as is expressly recorded in the holy scriptures.

1 Cor. x.
11.

2 Pet. ii. 6

Mat. x. 30.
Luke xviii.

30.
1 Tim. iv. 8

Wherein we are likewise farther told, that the overthrow and destruction of the disobedient Israelites *happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition.* Now in what sense can these judgments, inflicted on them, be said to serve as *our examples, to be written for our admonition* and to be as a warning to those, who after should live ungodly, unless it is intended hereby to declare to us, that punishments, adapted to our transgressions, are inflicted even in this world; and, that though the Almighty does not vouchsafe to shew a visible interposition upon every minute occasion, yet he so acts, in his divine wisdom, as not to leave us without a well-grounded hope, that our obedience will be rewarded in this present life, or without a just apprehension of instant vengeance, when we despise his holy word, and by our lives and actions set his authority at defiance?

Luke xiii. 1.
& seq.

Our Saviour, it is true, gives a general caution against forming a rash judgment concerning the cause of any signal calamity. *Suppose ye, saith he, that those Galilæans (whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices) were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? or think ye, that those, on whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay: but it by no means follows from hence, that temporal evils are not divine judgments, and our Lord immediately adds; but except ye repent, ye shall*

shall all likewise perish, that is, (to keep up the force of the answer) ye also shall suffer punishment even in this life. These words then are so far from discouraging the belief of temporal judgments, that they strongly confirm it, at the same time instructing us, what effect ought to be produced in our minds by such dreadful events.

Nor is it any objection to this doctrine, or at most but a weak one, that we often see a nation suffering under some grievous affliction, while others, which appear to us equally to have merited the divine vengeance, still continue in the enjoyment of peace and prosperity. It is by no means within the reach of our limited understandings, to make an exact estimate of the merit or demerit of any two individuals; much less is it within the compass of our faculties, to weigh the virtues and vices of nations compared one with the other and to adjust the balance. A consciousness therefore of our inability should warn us to suspend our opinion in such cases, and should restrain us from the impiety of forming delusive conclusions from uncertain premises.

But supposing that a number of individuals have all sinned equally, and in the same manner, against the supreme Being; and that one only of this number hath been afflicted with some signal punishment on that account, can we say that none ought to have
been

Isaiah xxvi.
10.

been punished because all have offended? And shall we overlook the hand of GOD, because he graciously chooses to spare some and to set forth others, as examples for the reformation of the rest? This would be making a bad use of his forbearing mercy and frustrating the very ends of it; *deplorably wicked are they, who, though favour be shewed to them, will still persist in dealing unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.*

Micah iv.
12.

Isaiah xxvi.
9.

We cannot indeed *know the thoughts of the Almighty, neither can we understand his counsel*, and when he hath not expressly declared, on what account he doth, or will, punish any people (as he did in the case of the Israelites) it would be impious in man to affect the knowledge thereof: but, to confess *the judgments of GOD in the earth* and so to apply them to ourselves as thereby to *learn righteousness*, by endeavouring to draw such conclusions as may tend to make us better christians and consequently better members of society, can never bring upon us the imputation of arrogating to ourselves a certain discernment of the decrees of heaven.

Hosea, in the words of the text, denounces a heavy judgment against the idolatrous Israelites, threatening them with the total dissolution of their government; *they shall abide, says the Prophet, many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice;*

sacrifice ; which prophecy was afterwards very signally fulfilled. The regal power among them was utterly extinguished, they were without a priest, (in which sense the word *prince* seems to be here used) and consequently without a sacrifice, entirely deprived of all the rites and ceremonies of their religion ; and surely a more grievous punishment could not be inflicted. To a rational creature, some of the highest and most valuable enjoyments of life arise from the steady execution of wise and equitable laws, from the protection of our just rights both civil and religious, and from beholding the general felicity of a society of men industriously and virtuously employed, each in promoting the welfare of himself and others. So great and so glorious a scene do these circumstances unfold to us, that we cannot contemplate it, with any degree of attention, without adoring the divine wisdom : and on the other hand, whenever these great ends of society are overturned, when the welfare of a community is destroyed, by a contempt of religion, the subversion of law, and the confusion of all order and government, we cannot help believing also, that this did not happen without the interposition of the Deity, so far, at least, as to have withheld his protection, which alone is fully sufficient. For, if we duly and deliberately consider the complicated nature of civil government, we shall find reason to think, that it requires the hand of the Almighty to maintain and support

Ps. lxxxix.

9.
lxxvi. 10.

lxv. 7.

support it. Should *He* but withdraw his grace and let loose the reins to the madness of men, the whole must be dissolved. Pride, ambition, vanity, self-interest, hatred, envy are powerful agents to effect this. These lie latent in the mere natural man and are ready to break forth upon every occasion, unless restrained by *him, who alone can rule the raging seas and still the noise of their waves, who can restrain the wrath of man and quell the tumult of the people.* If we add to the perverse dispositions before mentioned others of a still more turbulent nature, namely enthusiasm, and superstition, both of which are apt to look on every even the slightest opposition, as oppression and spiritual tyranny, what copious and impetuous sources do we see bursting forth to spread around a deluge of disorder! Such was the case of those times, which gave occasion to the religious observance of the present anniversary, when it pleased almighty God to suffer this nation to be plunged into all the calamities of a civil war.

Now tho' it would be presumptuous to assert, for what sins this nation was thus punished, yet an attempt to bring to remembrance some of those circumstances, which seem most remarkably opposite to religion and justice in the conduct of our ancestors, before the war broke out, may not only be allowed, but expected; and the more so, as the punishment seems to have been particularly levelled against the offence:

offence : and whenever we see this happen in a remarkable manner, and in an extraordinary case, we have reason to look upon it, as an instance of divine vengeance, and to think, that we are in part admitted into the designs of providence.

Our ancestors, at those unhappy times, had but just freed themselves from that intolerable yoke, which the church of Rome thinks fit to impose upon all her sons. They had, or ought to have had, fresh in their memory the solid and wise arguments, made use of, in their late controversies, to prove the unchristian spirit of papal tyranny, when those very men, who had so lately groaned under the iniquity and rigour of oppression, began to study how they might molest and persecute their fellow-subjects and protestant brethren. They gave up infallibility, and at the same time acted, as if they had been themselves not fallible ; but what sense, what reason, what justice could there be in such a proceeding ? The church of Rome acted according to her pretensions and principles at least ; but the behaviour of these men was not only contradictory to their own professions (as they must have perceived, had they impartially considered their actions) but even diametrically opposite to the constant tenor of that mild gospel, which they had taken for their rule, and had better opportunities of understanding, than the bigotted and ignorant members of that corrupt church,

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which

which they had quitted. Could they expect, that the plea, which they so justly made use of for their own advantage, should be tamely given up by others in the same situation? this was absurd, yet this was expected, and, when insisted upon, produced those fatal consequences, which we now read of with horror.

And here the hand of providence appears very plainly. The very men, who had acted without christian charity, met with none in their turn from those, who had complained of the breach of it. Thus were they punished in a manner suitable to their offence, and they who punished them, at last met with others full as merciless as themselves or their first oppressors. Such was the inhuman conduct of each party as it became predominant, nor were their proceedings when on the weaker side more justifiable. Did they not obstinately insist on trifles? were they willing to give up the least tittle in order to preserve peace? They were so far from it, that, with a bigotry and enthusiasm unworthy of the christian name, they made use of the pretence of conscience to sanctify the weakest of their frivolous scruples. They saw superstition every where, but in their own narrow minds, where perhaps it chiefly existed, so far at least, as mistaking the shadow for the substance makes one essential character of superstition, which is ever ready to be alarmed at things

things in their own nature indifferent, or if they are not wholly so, is always sure to lay an infinitely greater stress upon them, than they deserve. Thus were these men, for want of charity, that great and fundamental doctrine of christianity, suffered to scourge and torment one another, till they at last desisted thro' mere weariness and so became wise. They found, after experiencing many changes and entertaining vain hopes of what they esteemed a reformation in church and state, that it was much easier to pull down a whole constitution, than to agree in making any alteration in it.

When the opinions of men, on which the good order of society in a great measure depends, once become divided and unsettled, it is by no means an easy task to reunite and establish them on a firm foundation. Much therefore does it conduce to the happiness of a people, to have been early habituated to revere the laws and respect the customs of their own country; but happier still are those, among whom the gospel hath been established, if they have been mindful of it's doctrines and have reduced them into practice. For in that religion they will find, that all real and true union consists in a charitable indulgence towards the errors of their christian brethren, when those errors are indifferent in their nature and no way subversive of the fundamentals of pure christianity.

They will there also be instructed in the true measures of obedience to all those, who are put in authority over them, and will be induced to submit to their governors, as to persons appointed by God, for that great and noble purpose, the good order and happiness of society.

There is great reason to believe, that men, in those times, were more attentive to the sophistical arts and subtilties of controversy, in which they had been engaged by their opposition to the church of Rome, than to these genuine and wholesome principles of the gospel; and that instead of being willing to yield on either side and accommodate their differences, they placed their glory in being able to maintain, whatever had been once asserted, however trifling it might be or however wrong; and rather endeavoured on both sides to make the terms of union as hard as possible, than to remove the least obstacle, which might obstruct so desirable an end. But blessed be the God of peace and concord, who has dispelled from before *our* eyes those mists arising from obstinacy, pride, and enthusiasm, and suffered us to profit by the errors of our ancestors. The principles of charity are now firmly established and make an essential part of our laws and constitution. We are blessed with a monarch, who among many other instances of goodness, and
attentive

attentive care for the welfare of his subjects, has assured us of his intention to cherish and maintain these principles. And if we endeavour to regulate our conduct by so illustrious an example, in this and every other branch of duty; if we not only profess ourselves christians, but live according to the gospel of Christ, we may reasonably hope for the continuance of those blessings, which have hitherto been so largely bestowed upon us; *if we hearken unto the Lord, we shall dwell safely and shall be quiet from fear of evil; the Lord our GOD will be our light and our defence, and no good thing will he withhold from them, that walk uprightly.*

Prov. i. 33

Psal. lxxxiv.
11.

But, while we are pursuing these principles of charity, let us take care, lest we err on the other side, and suffer ourselves to look upon all opinions in religion as indifferent. The danger that way is equally great, and our enemies are formidable. They miss no opportunity of advancing their interest, and lie in wait on every occasion to take advantage even of our slightest errors. They are no less ready to preach indulgence, when protestantism can be affected by it, than they are to practise the contrary for the same purpose. Should they once, under false pretences, be able to persuade men, either that all religions are the same, or that all are equally entitled to toleration, one of their main points would be obtained, and their numbers increased.

increased. But let us continue to shew, that we are able to distinguish between charitable indulgence, and supine weakness; that, altho' we do not presume to offer up sin for sacrifice, to destroy or persecute our fellow-creatures under pretence of serving our Creator; yet we want neither strength nor resolution to vindicate our excellent constitution in church and state; and that we will not thro' negligence suffer it to be undermined by our known and inveterate enemies. To hold the balance even on this occasion is of all things the most important, and the want of it has brought this nation more than once near it's ruin, and particularly in those melancholy times, of which we have been now treating.

It may perhaps be thought, that notice should have been here taken of the disputes which arose about civil rights, as having largely contributed to bring on the confusion of those times. But the consideration of them does not seem to afford any useful religious doctrine, which hath not, or may not be drawn from those already mentioned; both the one and the other, the civil as well as the religious contests of our forefathers, equally furnishing matter for the same reflections. And we may be assured, that whenever the prince and people have learned their respective duties from our holy religion, and continue to practise them in christian charity, no contests will arise,

arise, which can disturb their union and destroy their peace. Nor can it be imputed more justly to any cause, than to the want of a due sense of the religion which they professed, that the prevailing party carried their resentment at last to such a degree, as to have shocked all sober-minded men, (however different in opinion as to their first motives) and to have astonished even many of those, who had been most deeply concerned, when they saw the fatal conclusion.

Thus it happens, whenever men are abandoned to themselves and marked out for divine vengeance; they wander about, as blind and destitute of a guide, turning themselves away from the very objects they are pursuing; *the devices of the crafty are disappointed and the counsels of the froward are subverted, they meet with darkness in the day-time, — and stumble at noon day as in the night.* And shall it not be looked upon as a judgment, when these things are done, not on a sudden by a thoughtless and giddy mob, but upon mature deliberation by the wise, the sagacious, the mighty men and counsellors of the land? That this was the case is evident; and one man, of no repute when those disorders began, was made the scourge in the hand of providence, to punish and afflict the rest. *So it seemed good in thy sight, O GOD, who increasest the nations and destroyest them, — thou makest peace and*
thou

Job v. 12.
13.

Isa. lix. 10.

Luke x. 21.
Job xii. 23.
Ipsi. xlv. 7.

Rom. xi. 33.

Job xii. 13.

Rom. xi. 36.

*thou createst evil, — thy judgments are unsearchable
and thy ways past finding out — with thee is wisdom
and strength, counsel and understanding, — for of thee,
and through thee, and to thee are all things, to whom
be glory for ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.

